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The Church Bell at Vandalia.

In Volume 2, No. 4, of the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society, January, 1910, was published an extract from the Illinois Monthly Magazine of December, 1830, giving an account of the donation to the Presbyterian Congregation of Vandalia of "a fine toned bell for the cupola of its meeting house."

This bell was the gift of Romulus Riggs, Esq., a merchant of Philadelphia, who presented it in the name of his infant daughter, Miss Illinois Riggs. The bell bore the inscription: "Illinois Riggs to the Presbyterian Congregation of Vandalia, 1830."

In a foot note to the article the Secretary of the Illinois State Historical Society asked for information as to the history of the little girl who had in her infancy made this interesting gift to the people of Vandalia.

Mr. Clinton L. Conkling, a relative of Illinois Riggs, has contributed a most interesting account of the building of the Church at Vandalia and of Mr. Riggs and his family.

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BELL AT VANDALIA, AND ITS DONOR.

The first Capitol building of Illinois, erected at Vandalia, was a plain two-story frame house of rude architecture and located on the corner of Fifth and Johnson Streets.

On December 9, 1823, during the third session of the Legislature held at Vandalia, this building was destroyed by fire. After the fire the Senate, for the rest of its session, occupied a building erected for divine worship by all denominations, but which was afterwards sold to the Presbyterian Church. This building was situated on the north side of the

public square, but was afterwards removed to a side street, and was still standing in 1910.

It was afterwards in the tower of this first church edifice erected in Vandalia that the first Protestant Church bell in Illinois was hung. This bell bears the following inscription:

“Illinois Riggs
To the Presbyterian Congregation of Vandalia.
1830.”

Illinois Riggs was a daughter of Romulus Riggs, who presented the bell in her name to the church. He was a merchant of Philadelphia and had extensive business dealings in Illinois, and became the owner of a large amount of lands in the Military Tract. At this time the French Catholics had several bells in their monasteries and churches at Kaskaskia and in the neighboring villages. This Vandalia bell is still in possession of the Presbyterian Church in that city.

This church building was erected pursuant to an Act of the General Assembly, approved June 12, 1823, by which the Governor was authorized to convey to certain persons, as trustees, a tract of ground for a graveyard, and also to convey to them five lots in the town of Vandalia, “for the purpose of erecting a house for divine worship, which shall be free to all denominations to preach in.” On one of the lots the building was to be placed, and the other lots were to be sold to pay for the cost of the building. (See the History of Fayette County, Illinois.)

Romulus Riggs died in Philadelphia October 2, 1846. His will was probated there October 6, 1846.

Illinois Riggs was a younger child of a large family. She was born January 15, 1827, and was married to Charles H. Graff, March 30, 1847. He died August 3, 1878. They had two children—Netta R. Graff, sometimes called Nettie Graff, born May 15, 1848; and Charles Frederick Graff, born December 5, 1863. He was editor of a newspaper for some years in Vineland, New Jersey. He was in 1911 living in Philadelphia. Netta R. Graff was married on June 15, 1882, to

Wilbur F. Gilder. She died June 2, 1897, leaving her husband surviving, but no descendants.

Illinois Riggs Graff died in Philadelphia May 8, 1911, leaving Charles F. Graff her only heir.

For details of the Riggs family, see special family histories of that family and of the Levering family, the latter compiled by John Levering, of Lafayette, Indiana. The former was probably prepared for George W. Riggs, the well known banker of a past generation in Washington, D. C. Whether published or not, we do not know.